



International Women's Day: Women and girls deserve better

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Statement by

On the occasion of Women's Day, a beautiful date to celebrate as it marks the victories of long battles fought by the generations of women who came before us, we should renew the commitment to walk the walk on gender equality.

The upcoming European Parliament elections will greatly influence the future of Europe and they offer a great opportunity to show we can deliver the change that so many women and girls are demanding.

In 1979, only 16 percent of European Parliament seats were held by women. Today, women comprise 36.1 percent of all members of the European Parliament. This percentage symbolically represents the rise towards more gender equality. Yes, great achievements have occurred in order to move towards a more inclusive and gender equal European society. The EESC has done its part in this respect, increasing the number of women in staff and members.

Nevertheless, this change is occurring at a very slow pace. Today, even if the number of women in political positions and in the corporate world has increased, women are still largely underrepresented among high-ranking political positions and corporate boards.

It is time that we practice what we preach. Sixty years ago, gender equality was enshrined in the Treaty of Rome as one of the EU's fundamental values. Since then we have come a long way in Europe in terms of how we ensure equality between women and men, but a lot more remains to be done.

In the context of persistent economic inequality and rising intolerance, it is essential for the EU to reaffirm its strong commitment to gender equality with actions.

Equality cannot be taken for granted, so it is time to marshal all Member States, civil society and social partners to take political action.

Let's not forget that everyone loses with inequality. According to the World Bank, the world economy is 160 trillion USD poorer because of gender inequality. Even today, an average woman has only $\frac{3}{4}$ of the rights of an average man. This is a tremendous loss of resources and opportunities that we cannot afford any longer.

Today, we invite all women and men across Europe to get actively involved in the EU elections campaign, both as candidates and voters. Let us ensure our meaningful representation in the Union's institutions to create a more balanced and just Europe.

Ensuring gender parity between women and men benefits not only women, but the entire society. It inspires the young generation and creates positive role models—like Greta Thunberg and Madeleine Kay, known as EU Supergirl, who recently took part in our Civil Society for rEUnaissance event.

To ensure a strong and sustainable future for Europe we cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

Women and girls deserve better: Every vote counts!